

An event for homeless: Community dinner feeds many, brings awareness

Chanel Davis

High Point Enterprise

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A warm place, good food and kind words were more than the usual for those High Point residents who showed up at Showplace Thursday.

This year's Homeless Memorial Community Dinner welcomed more than 500 homeless individuals from local shelters, transitional housing programs and off the streets for a hot meal and program.

More than 100 volunteers helped execute the massive task of serving dinner. Several agencies involved in presenting the program included Caring Services Inc., Carpenter's House, Home to Home, Open Door Ministries, The Salvation Army, West End Ministries and Triad Health Project.

"This is a night to recognize those who died and bring awareness to the homeless population in our community," said Steve Key , director at Open Door Ministries. "This is an opportunity for us to do something for those in the community that need our help, give them a nice meal and connect them with others in the community. Our goal is to help people who need help by connecting them with resources."

For Rose Flannery the program was a reminder that she is better off than some other members in the homeless community. Flannery, a client with the Salvation Army, said being in a shelter is hard but a blessing for her and her kids, a 3-year-old boy and 6-year-old girl.

"This is a dinner to bring the homeless together and remember the homeless that did not make it," Flannery said. "I am homeless but I have somewhere to stay, and I have a bed, food and a warm place to stay. I hope this event puts a spotlight on homelessness and they open more shelters. We have a lot of people out here sleeping under shelters and don't have anywhere to go."

The program also including a candle-lighting ceremony as a memorial service remembering 13 homeless individuals who died in the community this year.

"We acknowledge that their time on Earth was not always the easiest," said Sue Gamelin, representative with Open Door Ministries. "Most paused each day to give thanks for the simple blessings of the day; for shelter, food and companions. We pause tonight to give thanks for all of them."

Local agencies sponsored the event offering food, money, equipment and over 600 gifts bags.